**Public Telephones**

*134. SHRI I.D. SWAMI : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have made a plan to provide public telephones to each and every village in the country;

(b) if so, the number of villages provided with public telephones so far;

(c) the reasons for not providing telephones in the remaining villages;

(d) whether any target have been fixed by the Government in this regard; and

(e) if so, the time by which it is likely to be achieved?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Out of a total 6,04,374 villages, 2,70,607 villages have been provided Public Telephones as on 18-07-97.

(c) Remaining villages are being covered progressively.

(d) Yes Sir.

(e) By the end of IXth Five Year Plan.

**Import and Distribution of LNG**

135. SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VERMA :
SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI :

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether NTPC has drawn a long term plan for creation of 6000 MW power station based on liquified natural gas;

(b) whether NTPC has requested the Government for creation of a separate corporation to handle the import and distribution of LNG in power sector;

(c) if so, the decision taken by the Government; and

(d) the states in which such power projects based on LNG are proposed to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) is presently exploring the possibility of setting up LNG based large power stations on coastal locations. No final decision about setting up any such project has, however, been taken so far.

(b) and (c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of above.

*[Translation]*

**Development of Backward Districts**

*136. SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had given assurance for development of 100 backward districts of the country under its Common Minimum Programme;

(b) if so, whether no action has since been taken in regard thereto;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government are now contemplating on any time-bound scheme to implement such points of Common Minimum Programme; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) to (e) A Committee has been constituted to recommend criteria for identification of 100 most backward and poorest districts to facilitate preparation of Special Action Plan for infrastructure development in Rural Areas under Common Minimum Programme. The last meeting of this Committee was held on 22nd July, 1997.

*[English]*

**Working Expenses of Railways**

*137. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the percentage of wages, pensions etc. out of the total expenses of the Railways in 1995-96, 1996-97 and estimated in 1997-98;

(b) whether the operating cost has been estimated to be 90% or more of the gross receipts during 1997-98;

(c) if so, the magnitude of market borrowing and the annual interest liability on the same; and

(d) the steps taken to protect the Railways from the debt trap?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) The percentage of wages, pension etc. of the Total Working Expenses for 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 (BE) for Indian Railways are shown below :

| | 95-96 | 96-97 (RE) | 97-98 (BE) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| (i) Staff wages and other allowances | 36.9 | 36.5 | 43.8 |
| (ii) Pension | 11.3 | 12.9 | 8.8 |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| (iii) Fuel | 17.5 | 18.0 | 17.6 |
| (iv) DRF | 11.1 | 10.1 | 7.9 |
| (v) Others | 23.2 | 22.5 | 21.9 |

(b) Yes. Sir. The operating cost has been estimated to be 91.4% in 1997-98.

(c) Rs. 2150 crore is targetted to be raised as market borrowing through the Indian Railway Finance Corporation during 1997-98. The annual interest liability on Rs. 2150 crore is estimated at Rs. 235 crore approximately.

(d) There is no immediate threat of the Railways getting into a Debt Trap. However, Railways are taking necessary steps to augment their revenue and contain operating expenses in order to increase the internal generation of resources and keep market borrowings to the minimum. Indian Railways is also seeking greater budgetary support.

**Beneficiaries of M.W.S.**

*138. SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the number of small and marginal farmers benefited from Million Wells Scheme during the last three years, State-wise;

(b) the funds allocated and spent under this scheme, State-wise;

(c) whether any criteria has been fixed for giving priority to States while allocating funds under this scheme; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) to (d) The number of small and marginal farmers benefited under Million Wells Scheme (MWS) is not monitored at the Central level. However, the details of State-wise number of wells constructed for small and marginal farmers below poverty line under the scheme during the last three years are given in the enclosed Statement-I.

The State-wise details of the total funds allocated and funds utilised under MWS during the last three years are given in the enclosed Statement-II.

Funds under MWS are allocated to States/UTs on the basis of proportion of rural poor in the States/UTs to total rural poor in the country as per the estimates of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) survey. The States having higher proportion of rural poor get more allocation than those having lower proportion of rural poor.

***Statement-I***

*Wells Constructed Under Million Wells Scheme*

| S.No. | States/UTs | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. | Andhra Pradesh | 17498 | 10899 | 13169 |
| 2. | Arunachal Pradesh | 77 | 130 | 12 |
| 3. | Assam | 1651 | 1865 | 2332 |
| 4. | Bihar | 30045 | 25476 | 22911 |
| 5. | Goa | 31 | 37 | 33 |
| 6. | Gujarat | 6407 | 4107 | 3148 |
| 7. | Haryana | 1613 | 572 | 363 |
| 8. | Himachal Pradesh | 17 | 138 | 670 |
| 9. | J and K | 3409 | 1673 | 1544 |
| 10. | Karnataka | 4295 | 5236 | 3004 |
| 11. | Kerala | 3218 | 3468 | 2268 |
| 12. | Madhya Pradesh | 38989 | 35654 | 19950 |
| 13. | Maharashtra | 6322 | 8770 | 8002 |
| 14. | Manipur | 507 | 520 | 429 |
| 15. | Meghalaya | 483 | 732 | 885 |
| 16. | Mizoram | 1033 | 425 | 483 |
| 17. | Nagaland | 924 | 0 | 80 |
| 18. | Orissa | 26113 | 24263 | 18349 |
| 19. | Punjab | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 20. | Rajasthan | 3071 | 2457 | 2389 |
| 21. | Sikkim | 87 | 364 | 91 |
| 22. | Tamil Nadu | 6902 | 10899 | 5962 |
| 23. | Tripura | 1439 | 2049 | 1221 |
| 24. | Uttar Pradesh | 780 | 518 | 43 |
| 25. | West Bengal | 3845 | 2402 | 1401 |
| 26. | A and N Islands | 6 | 6 | 13 |
| 27. | Dadra and NH | 16 | 24 | 8 |
| 28. | Daman and Diu | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 29. | Lakshadweep | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 30. | Pondicherry | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | Total | 158780 | 142685 | 108760 |